DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 929 SP 035 275

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TITLE Team Negotiation and Decision-Making: Linking Leadership to Curricular and Instructional Innovation.
INSTITUTION National Center for School Leadership, Urbana, IL.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Apr 94
CONTRACT R117-C80003
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Collegiality; Curriculum Development; Educational Practices; *Experimental Curriculum; *Instructional Innovation; *Instructional Leadership; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Intermediate Grades; Interpersonal Communication; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; *Participative Decision Making; Principals; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teamwork; Trust (Psychology)
IDENTIFIERS *Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine how reform at the middle school level translates into classroom practice within the framework of innovation and decision-making. A set of field notes was developed through formal and informal interviews with the building principal and two interdisciplinary teams of teachers (N=11) who had moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. Data were also gathered from school, team, and classroom observations, school documents, curriculum guides, and unit plans. Findings indicated that teams negotiated decisions and accommodated personal preferences in a culture of trust, collegiality, and support. Findings also indicated that open communication and a high level of shared commitment characterized decision-making; that the support of the building principal was a major factor in the team's ability to waiver from district prescribed curriculum; and that individual team members were acknowledged for the leadership they provided in facilitating change. The interdisciplinary team in a middle school was identified as an important intermediary link between school level reform and changes in classroom practice. A summary of the type and date of each contact, the formal interview protocol, and a bibliography of school documents are appended. (LL)

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Team Negotiation and Decision-Making: Linking Leadership to Curricular and Instructional Innovation

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Running head: TEAM NEGOTIATION

Paper prepared for the Annual American Educational Research Association Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 4-8, 1994.

This work was supported by the National Center for School Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, through a Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement Grant, No. R117-C80003. The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Education.The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Carol Hoyt in the data collection for this project.

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Abstract

This report presents the findings of research conducted at Cross Keys Middle School in Florissant, Missouri, related to innovation and decision-making at the team level. Two interdisciplinary teams in the school were studied to better understand how reform at the school level gets translated into classroom practice. A set of field notes was developed from the formal and informal interviews, school, team, and classroom observations, and impressions gathered in the school between December, 1992 and June, 1993. School documents, curriculum guides, and unit plans were also analyzed for the report.

Four research questions were developed to guide the research and results were analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Both the core and encore team in the study had moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. Changes had occurred in curriculum on the core team (multiple interdisciplinary units of core subjects) and on the encore team (7th grade interdisciplinary unit of unified arts subjects: 8th grade Allied Arts program), and instructional practices had become more active for students (cooperative learning, labs, experiments, role-play and simulation, problem-based learning, manipulatives).

The teams negotiated decisions and accommodated personal preferences in a culture of collegiality and support. While the individual construction of the two teams had varied somewhat, a core of teachers had remained constant on each team for the past several years enabling them to build a level of trust and rapport identified as critical by participants to implement changes. Decisions were made by consensus, however, dissension was allowed. Open communication and a high level of shared commitment characterized decision-making on the teams. The support of the building principal was identified as a major factor in the team's ability to waiver form district prescribed curriculum, in protecting the teams during periods of experimentation and exploration, and in buffering the influence of others less supportive of change in the school. Individual team members were also acknowledged for the leadership they provided in facilitating changes in curriculum and instruction.

The interdisciplinary team in a middle school was identified as an important intermediary link between school level reform and changes in classroom practice. Much was learned about how decision-making at the team level prompted needed reform in curriculum and instruction

Team Negotiation and Decision-Making; Linking Leadership to Curricular and Instructional Innovation

Introduction

The making of a middle school is more than simply changing the name of the school, its grade configuration, or organizational pattern (Lounsbury, 1992). The real work of the school begins when traditional practices in curriculum and instruction are challenged in ways that bring about substantive change in classroom practice. Curricular and instructional innovation requires a redefinition of what is important to teach and how it can best be learned. And although integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum has been identified as a common practice in effective middle schools, many still cling to traditional content-specific curriculum and teacher-directed instruction (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992). Schools needed to be studied that were able to negotiate changes in "what to teach" and "how best to teach it" amidst state, district, and school forces which might make maintaining the status quo easier, to determine how curricular and instructional innovation could be achieved.

Initial research conducted at Cross Keys Middle School in 1991-1992 indicated that the school was one that might enlighten others on how curricular and instructional innovation could be accomplished. Results of this first phase of research at the school indicated that progress had been made towards implementing many of the principles associated with the national middle school movement, including curricular and instructional innovation (Polite, 1993). It remained unclear at the end of the first year of study, however, how school level reform was translated into classroom practice. The second phase of research at Cross Keys Middle School, conducted during 1992-1993, explored the link between school level reform and classroom practice by examining how two interdisciplinary teams in the school negotiated and made decisions related to program innovation.

Research Method

Site Selection

A case study was conducted at Cross Keys Middle School, Florissant, Missouri, as part of a research project sponsored by the National Center for School Leadership (NCSL), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. The school had been honored as a United States Exemplary School in 1989 and was identified as one

which had implemented many of the principles associated with the national middle school movement in earlier research (Polite, 1993). The school had undergone major changes in moving from a traditional junior high school to a middle school, and as such, was organized into interdisciplinary teaching teams rather than subject-matter departments. Four to six teachers, placed either on core teams (math, science, social studies, language arts) or encore teams (art, industrial technology, home economics, foreign language), were provided a daily common planning period in the school schedule. This time in the schedule provided teams with the opportunity to work together, design and plan curriculum, share instructional ideas, discuss student issues, and make important decisions regarding their students. The team, then, represented an intermediary level between the school as a whole and the individual classroom and needed to be studied to understand its role in curricular and instructional reform.

Two of the school's six interdisciplinary teams were selected for the research using the following selection criteria.

(1) Recognition by Peers: In June, 1992, teachers in the school were asked to respond in writing to the following question posed by the researcher at a school-wide faculty meeting; "If the Secretary of Education were to visit your school for one day next year, which team or teams should he visit?"

(2) Willingness: The two teams which were both noted by teachers in their response to the question above, and who were willing to participate in the study, were selected. Team leaders were contacted so that the researcher could answer questions related to the project and confirm participation by all team members prior to data collection.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to better understand the link between school level reform and classroom practice by examining how curricular and instructional decisions were negotiated on interdisciplinary teams in a middle-level school. How individuals and teams made decisions about curricular and instructional practices, how district and state forces impacted their ability to change, how the school's administration influenced decision-making, and what supports were needed on the team to initiate innovation were explored. The following research questions were developed to guide the research.

(1) What specific changes were made in curriculum and instruction on the interdisciplinary teams in the study?
(2) How did teachers negotiate with one another to implement these changes?
(3) What internal and external forces impacted the team's ability to negotiate change?
(4) How did the leadership in the school and on the team impact the types and rate of change in curriculum and instruction?

Data Collection and Analysis

Between December, 1992, and June, 1993, the researcher and an assistant spent a total of 14 days at the school collecting impressions, making observations of school, team, and classroom activities, and conducting informal and formal interviews (see *Appendix A*). Signed consent was collected for each of the 12 formal interviews conducted for the project. The 11 teachers on the two teams in the study and the building principal were interviewed using a formal protocol developed by the researcher (see *Appendix B*). Follow-up probes were used for each question depending on the initial responses. Each interview was taped, transcribed, and returned to subjects for review. While the school was not guaranteed anonymity, individuals were assured confidentiality and no information about specific interviews was shared with other members of the team or school. Edited transcripts of formal interviews were combined with notes of impressions from both the site researcher and assistant, informal interviews, conversations, and school, team, and classroom observations to develop a 350 page set of field notes for analysis.

School and team documents were also reviewed to provide supportive evidence for data gathered during interviews and observations (see *Appendix C*). Specifically, curriculum units and lesson plans were analyzed which related to classroom observations or team discussions.

Data were analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Categories, themes, and typologies were devised to interpret data and were jointly analyzed by the research assistant to insure that the resultant conceptualizations were comprehensive. Methodological triangulation was used to analyze data collected from interviews, observations, and the physical evidence gathered from the two teams (Merriam, 1988). The final draft of the case study was shared with the participants for a final validation of the research.

Site Description

Cross Keys Middle School was one of three middle schools, fifteen elementary, and three high schools in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. The 666 students in grades 7 and 8 were 40% African-American; 58.5% White; 1% Asian; .3% Hispanic and .2% Native American. Twenty-nine classroom teachers on six interdisciplinary teams, eleven exploratory staff, two full-time counselors, two assistant principals and one building principal provided the educational program.

The two teams which participated in the study represented both the core and encore program. The five member core team consisted of teachers of math, science, social studies, language arts and special education. Teachers on the team each taught classes in their primary content area and a reading/writing workshop class. One member served as the team leader during the year and coordinated team meetings and activities. The team was in their second year of a plan initiated in 1991-92 as a two-year, multi-age team. Due to changes in enrollment and staffing, and intervention by the district office, the team had to be reconfigured the second year as a straight 8th grade team. Students who were on the team as 7th graders were reassigned to the team for the second year and additional 8th graders were added to make a full team. Many of students and three of the teachers had already worked together as a team a full year. The special education teacher was new to the team during the year of study and was hired specifically to integrate special education students. While the time spent in the resource room by each special needs student varied, the goal was for students to spend the majority of their time in regular classes. The resource teacher was considered part of the team for planning purposes and was often in regular classes providing instruction alongside her colleagues on the team.

The six member encore, or exploratory team in the study, consisted of two teachers of art and one each of industrial technology, home economics, Spanish and French. This team served all students in the school, both 7th and 8th grade, and had also experienced a recent reorganization. One of the art teachers and the French teacher had been on core teams the year prior and were reassigned to the encore team due to changes in enrollment and staffing. This team also had an assigned team leader who organized and coordinated activities of the team. Students in the school were assigned to a core team and also were explored to the exploratory curriculum through the encore team. Students received approximately 42 minutes of instruction

in the encore area daily. The 7th grade curriculum exposed all students to each of the encore areas on a rotation and included a semester long interdisciplinary unit called *The Cookie Kompany*. 8th graders were allowed to select a year of Spanish or French, or were rotated through the Allied Arts program which was being developed and refined by the encore team during the year of study.

The opportunity to study both a core and encore team in the school provided the researcher with a broad view of the curriculum. A variety of teaching styles, years of experience, and specializations were represented by faculty on the two teams who are to be acknowledged for their willingness to spend time thinking about questions and talking with the researcher so that a better understanding could be gained of how curricular and instruction innovation can be achieved.

Results

Results were organized around the research questions developed to guide the case study. Snapshots were developed from the field notes to illustrate findings for each question and represent the major results of the study.

SNAPSHOT #1:

QUESTION: What changes were made in curriculum and instruction?

RESULTS: A Move From "Teaming" to "Theming"

As the encore team sat comfortably around three tables in the home economics classroom where they held their daily team meetings, they discussed the Cookie Kompany Unit underway for the 7th graders in the school. The six teachers, representing art, home economics, industrial technology, Spanish and French, were working out their plans for the coming week and began to discuss the focus on their team and in the school on integrated curriculum.

"Things need to be integrated. We do theme, not team, but theme teaching and that's what we're doing with this unit when you get right down to it. We've got a theme here and we're using it to tie things together".

"We've researched middle school and have bought into the idea that this is a time for exploration for kids. They need a lot of exploration...and if we do thematic teaching, they hook in. We hope this [unit] ties it all together for the students."

> *As teachers we have to "step back and see the whole picture". "We're not [art teachers, or home ec teachers, or foreign language teachers, or shop teachers]. We're Cookie Kompany teachers" and "kids are starting to see the connections".*

This excerpt of dialogue from an encore team meeting illustrated the focus for change in curriculum and instruction for both teams during the year of study. Each team shared a set of beliefs about how early adolescents should be taught that were based on their commitment to middle school practices. In addition to working for several years on interdisciplinary teams, teachers believed that integrated curriculum and active, hands-on instructional practices were needed to reach their students.

The *Cookie Kompany Unit* represented only one of the encore team's efforts to integrate the curriculum across traditional subject-matter lines and to actively involve students in the classroom. They appeared committed to exposing students to a variety of subject areas and experiences. As one teacher said during a formal interview, "As a team I think we need to give kids an overview of the exploratory area without necessarily giving specialization. We have to show them how everything really does dovetail with each other and that what you love in one area can transfer into another area...We need to show them that everything ties together and that it all ties to life as well".

The *Cookie Kompany Unit* developed by the encore team for 7th grade, integrated unified arts subjects with full team participation.

> The Cross Keys Cookie Kompany is an interdisciplinary unit integrating curriculum from art, home economics, foreign language, and industrial technology. We used the Cookie Kompany theme to help students see the relationship between subjects and give them a more realistic idea of how their lives are affected by these subjects...Students will explore the operation of business and demonstrate productive work habits, both as individuals and within cooperative groups (Cookie Kompany Unit, 1992, p.1).

Following an initial two-week rotation of all unified arts classes at the beginning of the year, all 7th graders were regrouped for the *Cookie Kompany* unit. This unit was followed by a rotation of three paired units: (1) *French Impressionists* (French and art); (2) *Quilt Making* (home economics and art); (3) *Woodworking* (Spanish and

industrial technology). Students rotated through the units in three week cycles and two teachers teamed for each of the units.

The 8th grade Allied Arts curriculum was being developed during the year of study to move towards a more integrated curriculum for art, home economics, and industrial technology. Spanish and French were taken as one year electives and operated under the constraints required for movement into a high school foreign language program. Throughout the year, teachers on the encore team discussed their commitment to integrated curriculum during interviews and these discussions were verified through observations of units which were implemented during the year.

While students on the core team learned about the French Revolution through the *Liberte Unit* (Interact, 1970), another quiet revolution was taking place in the curriculum and instruction on the team. Their work to use the *Liberte Unit* was representative of the many changes which had occurred not only during the past several years in the school, but also of those changes which were implemented on the team during the year of study.

The core team provided interdisciplinary units of core subjects with full team participation in addition to the units which dyads on the team had developed. Some of their units were commercial products, such as the *Liberte* and *Newscast* simulations (Interact, 1970), while others were teacher produced. The work the school had done on integrated curriculum, represented in the publication *A Place of Our Own* (Kowal, Graham, Hawkins, & Bick, 1991), was used as a model for the development of integrated units used on the team. For example, a unit called *Hello, I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name* was written by teachers to develop a sense of community. Other units were of shorter duration, such as the *Math Renaissance Unit* which integrated math and science, or the specialized units individual teachers on the team had developed for their own content area.

The two teams had made numerous changes in their curriculum by placing less emphasis on textbook driven curriculum. More traditional lecture-discussion and drill-and-practice methodologies were being replaced with more active techniques. Teams were observed using math manipulatives, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, experiments, labs, projects, and technology to engage students in their learning. While remnants of a more traditional program and teacher-centered

practice remained, the teams had broken out of the mold and had traversed new ground. How they came to move in that direction evolved from decisions made in the school, on the team, and by each of them as individuals as they confronted the questions about what should be taught and how it could best be presented to students.

SNAPSHOT #2:

QUESTION: How did teachers negotiate to implement these changes?

RESULTS: A Move From "Coercion" To "Consensus"

> *We learned several years ago that it was better to not try to force change on folks who are not willing. If we have what we think is a good idea, we'll share it, and if people on the team want to join in, they're certainly welcome. If they don't, it's not a character flaw for them to say 'no, I don't see myself doing this'. Then, those that want to go ahead figure out a way to do it with whoever is left.*
>
> *We fought a lot of battles several years ago trying to get people to do stuff they didn't want to do. Even when we were successful at getting them to do it, the product wasn't very wonderful. So, each of us has the right to say 'no' and I think that's an important part of teamwork.*

This excerpt from a formal interview illustrated how the teams negotiated for change in curriculum and instruction. "Negotiation", "coaxing", "accommodating" and "simply requesting" were terms used to describe the decision-making processes used on the teams. Teachers reported that at first they worked on things that were "tried and true" but as trust and rapport developed among team members, and they gained familiarity with their students, they addressed issues which required shared decision-making. This process was described by one teacher as a fairly simple matter. "It's usually a pretty straight forward question. We'd say, here is the material. Look it over. Let's talk about it. Do you feel you can be involved in this with us or not?"

Some decisions were negotiated between two or three teachers on a team and did not require full team involvement. These decisions were quietly made between the individuals involved, although they generally shared their ideas and decisions with

their colleagues. For example, when the science and math teacher on the core team decided to do a short integrated unit on famous mathematicians, they worked out the details of the content and schedule between themselves, but kept their colleagues informed of their progress.

Other times, ideas for changes in curriculum or instruction were brought to the team as a whole. Open dialogue occurred about what the proposed changes meant, how they might be implemented, and what impact the changes might have on students. They "bounced ideas off each other" to negotiate for time, students, space, and involvement. They "laid tasks out on the table and waited for individuals to volunteer" rather than to assign tasks to individual team members. They worked to build consensus, however, they allowed each individual on the team to determine if they would be involved in any given project. The following expert form a formal interview with one teacher demonstrated how the teams moved for change while accommodating individual differences.

> When we meet as a team, we talk and let everyone have their say. We listen and let things flow naturally. We then seem to come to an agreement on things...It's a process, an ongoing process that allows for different personalities.

As teams came to know one another, however, the "chemistry of the group", as one teacher called it, influenced even the more reluctant members of the team to change. The need for honesty and trust, for open communication, and a willingness to try certain ideas for "the sake of the group" did move some individuals to try new strategies that they might not be willing to admit they tried in a public forum. "I've worked with people that have the reputation of not buying into things at the school level, but back on the team, they'll do it". The support the team supplied, and in some cases, the protection it gave individuals from public scrutiny, allowed some to take risks that their teammates believed they might not have otherwise taken.

This risk-taking was identified as an important factor by many of the teachers in the study. They talked about the support they felt from their team as a whole, and in some cases of the support they felt from a given individual on their team. They also acknowledged, however, that part of making a decision to risk or to change was very individual and personal.

> Some of being able to [do something different] is having permission from other folks on the team and some of it is giving myself permission to do it. The biggest step was

> giving myself permission and saying it will be OK if I just didn't teach [the old way] all the time. This has been evolutionary....I would not have jumped into the pool [all at once] and I would have hated it if someone had pushed me.

The decisions that the teams made ranged from the easy and painless to the difficult and traumatic. Individual choices, values, attitudes, styles, and experiences had to be taken into account as each team operationalized its commitment to integrated curriculum and hands-on instruction.

The culture of the teams was very personal, collegial and supportive. They did not always agree with one another, yet they were able to debate, discuss, and question issues, suggestions, and ideas. Each team appeared to be philosophically aligned as a unit. They wanted to change and shared a belief that integrated curriculum and hands-on instruction were best practice for middle grades students. Instead of focusing on *what* was important, they concentrated on *how* they would get the job done. As one teacher said, "The problems we have with integrated curriculum are not so much whether it's good, but how to do it well".

The two teams had also developed a common acceptance and understanding of one another that created a personal, intimate atmosphere on each team. Both teams were a combination of veteran staff who had teamed together before and new members to the team from either other teams in the school or from outside the school.. They talked about the importance of "integrating people before you can integrate curriculum" and that "it's not so much knowing each other's curriculum as it is knowing each other". Teachers on both teams identified the support they felt from having "people who are willing to take some chances and want me to take some chances...so I don't feel like [they think] I'm off the wall because I try [new things]" on their team. The foundation that was provided by both the personal understanding and professional assistance teachers gave to one another created a personalized culture of collegiality and support. It appeared that this culture was instrumental in providing the needed support to negotiate decision-making for changes in curriculum and instruction.

SNAPSHOT #3:

QUESTION: What forces impacted the teams' ability to change?

RESULTS: A Move from "They Say" to "We Say"

> *We don't spend much time discussing the state testing program or district guidelines. I think we each sort of keep that filed someplace but we don't use that as what motivates what we do. We know those directives are there and we know what those expectations are on the district and state levels, but I think that what's more important to us is that our team is successful, that the kids are successful. The most important thing is that the kids experience some things and are allowed to grow.*

Throughout the year of study it appeared that there were many forces which influenced the teams in their decision-making process in varying degrees. Forces both inside and outside of the team and school were identified during formal interviews and through team and classroom observations as factors which both supported and inhibited the teams' ability to change. The above excerpt from a formal interview with a core teacher, however, generally defined the prevailing attitude of the two teams towards forces which could make their work to change curriculum and instruction problematic.

It was clear that teachers understood state and district curricular and assessment requirements, as these were mentioned as issues which are "sort of filed someplace" or "minimal sorts of things" that "just have to be done". One teacher said "It will make the state happy if the children do well on the [standardized test]", yet state and district mandates did not appear to be the driving forces for change on the teams. Both teams acknowledged the reality of state and district expectations, and used them as a "broad framework" for planning.

Additional internal and external forces were also identified during the year of study. Prompts in the literature spurred some of the changes. "I try to keep up on current readings in middle school...and I see indications that things need to be integrated". Others appeared to be motivated by "pressures all around us" to meet the needs of the "different kids and different society" they served. Parental and community expectations, high school requirements, and implications of national curriculum associations, such as the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, were also identified as forces with which teachers had to contend in making

programmatic decisions. Organizational factors, such as the school schedule, planning time, instructional blocks,availability of resources, class size, and financial support, were identified as additional factors which could either support or inhibit team progress.

A consistent support that individuals on both teams identified as critical for change to occur was the building principal. She was identified as a "great support" who had "taken a lot of heat from a lot of different people" to buffer the teams from outside forces. She publicly served as a "cheerleader" for the teams' progress, offered "suggestions for innovation", "encouragement", "financial support for materials and staff development", and the "freedom to do what we think is best for our kids". Teachers talked about the confidence they felt in themselves as a result of her belief in their professional abilities to make decisions, and while she held them accountable for student growth, she supported and allowed for experimentation and failure as natural consequences of innovation. She had set a tone in the school which encouraged and supported change, secured outside resources for needed materials, and then turned the decision-making process over to teams to operationalize their program in ways they felt were best for students on their teams.

Yet overall, changes the two teams had implemented appeared to be primarily motivated by students' needs. "[We do the interdisciplinary units] because of the response of the kids. Attendance is up when we do a unit...They don't think of it as learning. It' fun....They pay attention better and are willing to risk more". While various forces inside and outside of the school were identified, they did not allow these factors to side-track them from their vision of an integrated, active program for students. They wanted students to generally understand and appreciate various disciplines in the program, yet they did not focus exclusively on the details associated with a single-subject approach. They determined their success by responses from both their current students and from their graduates who sometimes returned to let their teachers know what their experiences had meant to them.

> Kids come back from high school and ask if we are still doing units because they say it was the best part of their middle school experience.
> I don't judge my success on the basis of how many kids get As. I judge myself, or my performance, on things that are more nebulous; kids being here regularly; kids having a look on their face that they're enjoying what they're doing; kids asking if we're going to so something again.

SNAPSHOT #4:

QUESTION: How did leadership impact the teams' ability to change?

RESULTS: A Move from " Designated " to "Distributed" Leadership

As the team meeting was getting underway, the last of the group entered, obviously distraught. One of her teammates noted her unusual behavior and immediately asked her what was wrong.

"Another teacher just asked me if what we're doing in our integrated unit is educationally sound. She wanted to know if we were teaching any knowledge in our subject matter in the unit".

While it was clear that this teacher was upset by her colleague's inquisition, she told her teammates that she responded to the question calmly. I told her "kids are learning what we want them to learn in the unit. We look at the program as a whole and give kids what they need to see the whole picture". Her teammates unanimously agreed.

But she lamented that her colleague "didn't understand our curriculum or what we're trying to do". The team decided that they all had to try harder to let others know what they were doing on the team, but if others didn't agree, that was acceptable too. They were still going to do what they thought was best for kids.

This event was used to describe the leadership observed in the school. The teacher in this scenario was not a designated team leader. She did not hold a formal position of authority in the school, yet she did not hesitate to take a stand with her colleague on issues which she saw as her prerogative. While some of the leaders in the school held formal positions of authority, others did not. Leaders were distributed throughout the school who were identified for the experience,expertise, courage, integrity, and commitment which they brought to bear on the decision-making processes on the team and in the school.

A typology developed by the researcher described the **prestigious**, **visionary**, **instructional**, **positional**, and **resistance** leaders in the school (Polite, 1993).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Individuals identified by their colleagues as leaders of influence,leaders of curriculum, leaders of groups, leaders of direction, and leaders of the loyal opposition, emerged naturally and by choice to set, implement, manage, and question the course the school had taken. School leaders sometimes took risks and made decisions that were not popular. At other times they were admired by their colleagues for their wisdom, insight or integrity. Some leaders were well liked; others were not, yet they all played a key role in the reform effort underway in the school.

Likewise, these leaders worked in and through the team to support innovation and to mediate district and school forces which could have interfered with the their progress. For example, when the core team was informed that the district would not support a two-year team, *visionary*, *prestigious*, and *positional* leaders emerged to identify alternate solutions so that this innovation could be implemented regardless of the opposition.

Individuals on both teams commented on the importance of the building principal as both a *visionary* and *instructional* leader in the school. They told of times when she ran interference for them with the district or with other teams or individuals in the school; of how she found the resources needed to implement their ideas; and they described the value of her moral support when change was hard and progress was slow. While she was not the only leader identified in the school that was influential in promoting team level innovation, she was mentioned often as a key player in the change process both at the school and team levels.

Other *visionary, prestigious, instructional, and positional* leaders in the school impacted the ability of the teams to make changes as well. While both teams had individuals on them who were identified as one type of leader or another in the school, not all types of leadership were provided directly on both teams. One team, for example, had a *visionary* leader who was described by colleagues as the "idea person" who gets "sudden inspirations" to creatively solve problems for the team. Another *positional* leader was described as the "detail person" who moved the team along and got the "nitty gritty work done for the team". An *instructional* leader on one team was the "resource person" for curricular materials and information.

Not every individual on these two teams was identified as a leader in the school and not every leader in the school was on one of the two teams studied. Yet the leaders distributed across the school were able to influence the work in these two teams through interactions with individuals on the teams and in larger school settings. Formal and informal meetings, professional development activities, and school committees continued to provide opportunities for leaders in the school to emerge and impact the change process.

Discussion

The middle school movement has gained national attention since the publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989), and many schools are heeding the call to change from a traditional junior high school to one which embodies the middle school philosophy. Yet many schools which have undertaken a change initiative have fallen short of making the curricular and instructional innovations needed (Beane, 1993, 1991, 1990). While several models are available to help schools develop interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum (see for example Fogarty, 1991; Beane, 1990; Jacobs, 1989), and the benefits of active, hands-on instruction have been documented (see for example Muth & Alvermann, 1992), widespread use of these practices has not yet been fully realized. A better understanding of how core and encore teams negotiate and make decisions to move away from content-specific curriculum to a more integrated, interdisciplinary approach using innovative instructional strategies was needed.

The core and encore teams at Cross Keys Middle School who participated in this study had moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. Their shared commitment to focus more on students' needs and less on content-specificity enabled them to more easily negotiate change and accommodate individual preferences. A school culture which championed change and a team atmosphere which was personal, collegial, and supportive were described by teachers as instrumental in encouraging and supporting the risk-taking needed for innovation. Internal and external forces were identified as both supports and inhibitors of the change process, but were in large part mitigated by the prevailing attitude on the two teams in the study that students' needs should be the determinant of curriculum and instruction. Leaders distributed throughout the school

emerged to encourage and support the teams in their change efforts and were instrumental in creating a school climate which made change a norm in the school.

The process used in the teams to negotiate change appeared to combine many factors which have been organized by the researcher into a team decision-making typology.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The foundation for team decision-making was based in the **school culture**. Change had become a norm in the school throughout its transition years and all in the school had been exposed to professional development activities which provided the needed **knowledge base** for change to occur. Time had been provided for teachers to read current literature, review research, and to reflect critically on whether or not what they had read would work in the context of their own school. The value of integrated curriculum and the use of active instructional strategies had been clearly emphasized at the building level. The teams were buffered from external forces, such as state and district mandates and pressure from parents and community, in large part by the building principal. She ran interference for the teams as they experimented with various innovations, provided personal and professional support, and clearly articulated the message that what these teams were doing to change curriculum and instruction was the direction the school should take. Clearly, the school culture of change encouraged and supported the teams in their work.

With support from the school, and a knowledge base that provided needed information, the teams were able to articulate a shared understanding of what direction they intended to take in curricular innovation. Their **mission** was a combination of **personal beliefs and values** and **shared beliefs and values**. Individual differences were respected, and teachers commented that the mutual respect for the unique knowledge and experience of each person were essential to the decision-making process. Their common focus on **student needs and success** was the glue that held the teams together even when disagreements occurred. They concentrated on *how* to change rather than *why* and valued the contribution that each individual could make to promote student learning. They used student success as the indicator of progress.

Both groups had developed a **teaming ethic** which resulted in discussions about "our" students, "our" schedule, and "our" decisions. Because they valued their team, they were willing to work hard and to engage in often lengthy discussions about any particular decision. **Communication** on the team was open and relaxed. Each person was allowed time to talk and they prompted one another to share not only content but feelings as well. They prized honesty, even when that meant disagreement would ensue, and called each other to task if they suspected that something important had gone unsaid. While it was clear that coming to **consensus** on a particular decision was important to both teams, they **allowed for dissension** and did not coerce one another into agreement. If a teacher on either team felt that a particular unit, strategy, or program was not appropriate, they did not participate. Others who were willing and interested, however, were not prevented from going ahead with their plans. Even when innovations were only implemented by one teacher, their willingness to risk was valued and supported by teammates. When teachers experimented with new ideas, the successes and failures they had experienced were processed together. The willingness of both teams to let people say "no" and others say "yes" appeared to be a critical factor in their ability to initiate substantive change.

The high level of **commitment** which had developed on the teams appeared to be the result of long-term interaction with one another. On both teams, several members had worked together on the same team for a number of years and trust was high. Over time, they had come to know and accept one another, and were comfortable with their differences. Then when new team members were added, they were brought quickly into the fold. Likewise, both teams had the opportunity to work with the same students for more than one year. The encore team saw both 7th and 8th graders, giving them the chance to better know and understand the students they served. The core team, in their second year of a two year plan, had already worked with the majority of their students for a full year. Because both teams knew their students and each other better, they appeared more willing to risk. Keeping team members together longer, and allowing teams to keep the same students for more than one year, may be important considerations in other schools promoting curricular and instructional innovations.

The **personal style** and **professional background** of individuals were taken into consideration during the decision-making process. Differences in

personality traits, needs, experience, background, and attitudes were openly acknowledged as a strength rather than a roadblock. They built one another's level of confidence so they could individually and collectively pursue their agenda for change, even in the face of school and district inhibitors. They faced the fear of making mistakes and accepted both failure and success as realities of progress. They banded together when occasional ridicule from others in the school challenged their decisions and they dealt with the ambiguity that is a by-product of change.

Student needs and success remained paramount in the decision-making process for both teams. When students enjoyed their learning, were active, involved, and successful, teachers on both teams celebrated their decisions. They did not pretend to have all of the answers, yet they were willing to experiment with various ideas until they found one that worked.

Summary

Real change in schools is hard and much is required to make the substantive improvements called for by the major reform movements of our time. As one of these reforms, the national middle school movement has the potential to restructure the way schools serve early adolescent learners. If this movement is to have long-term impact, then schools must do more than change organization and structure. Programmatic reform must occur. This study has identified the interdisciplinary team as a critical intermediary link between school level and classroom reform. The needed changes in curriculum and instruction were negotiated through a team decision-making process which allowed distributed leaders to influence practice. Organizational considerations were identified as important, however, alone these factors did not account for the team's willingness to change what and how they taught. Political and personal protection from internal and external forces were needed, however, alone this support did not bring about change in practice. With a solid foundation of knowledge, teams were able to articulate a shared mission to focus on student needs and success. A teaming ethic, fused by communication and commitment, allowed teams to move for consensus on shared decisions, while tolerating dissension. The diversity in the personal style and professional background of each individual was prized and respected. The school had nurtured a culture which made change the norm and the two teams in this study rose to the challenge.

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Appendix A
Summary of Contacts
December, 1992 through June, 1993

Type of Contact	Date
Initial contact with school	12/09/92
Negotiation with teams for participation	01/05/93
Phone call for appointments	01/05/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	02/10/93
Informal interviews	02/10/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	02/10/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	02/10/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	02/10/93
Contact off site: Middle Level Educators' Network:SIUE	02/24/93
Informal interviews	03/02/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	03/02/93
Chaperoned CC Team Field Trip	03/02/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	03/02/93
Informal Interviews	03/09/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	03/09/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	03/09/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	03/09/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	03/09/93
Classroom observation	03/09/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	03/18/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	03/18/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	03/18/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	03/25/93
Informal discussions with teachers	03/25/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	03/25/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	03/25/93
Classroom Observation (FF Team)	04/08/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	04/08/93

Appendix A Continued:
Summary of Contacts

Type of Contact	Date
Classroom observation (FF Team)	04/08/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	04/27/93
Informal discussions with teachers	04/27/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	04/27/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	04/27/93
Chaperoned Field Trip (FF Team)	05/04/93
Informal interviews with teachers	05/13/93
Classroom observations (FF Team)	05/13/93
Classroom observations (CC Team)	05/13/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	05/13/93
Formal Interview teacher 1 (FF Team)	05/13/93
Formal Interview principal	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 1 (CC Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 2 (FF Team)	05/18/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 2 (CC Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 3 (FF Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 4 (FF Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 5 (FF Team)	05/18/93
Formal Interview teacher 3 (CC Team)	05/27/93
Formal Interview teacher 4 (CC Team)	05/27/93
Formal Interview teacher 5 (CC Team)	05/27/93
Formal Interview teacher 6 (CC Team)	05/27/93
Phone call to school	06/04/93

Appendix B
Formal Interview Protocol

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1. What do you think you and your teammates are committed to accomplishing this year at [school name]?

   Probes: What is being done to accomplish this?
   What facilitates your work?
   What hinders your work?

2. What specific changes have been made in curriculum and instruction over the past few years at [school name]? on your team?

   Probes: When did these changes occur?
   How were these decisions made? implemented? evaluated?
   What role, if any, did the state, district, school, team have in the decision-making process?

3. How do you know when changes need to be made in curriculum and instruction?

   Probes: What course of action do you take?
   What supports do you need?
   What inhibitors do you face?
   How does your team negotiate decision-making?

4. What changes would you like to see in curriculum and instruction in the school in the future?

   Probes: What supports will be needed to implement these changes?
   What barriers will need to be overcome to implement these changes?
   Who, specifically, will need to be involved to make sure these changes are implemented?

5. What else, if anything, do I need to know to fully understand how curricular and instructional decisions are made on your team?

Appendix C
Bibliography of Documents

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Figure 1
Cross Keys Middle School Leadership Typology

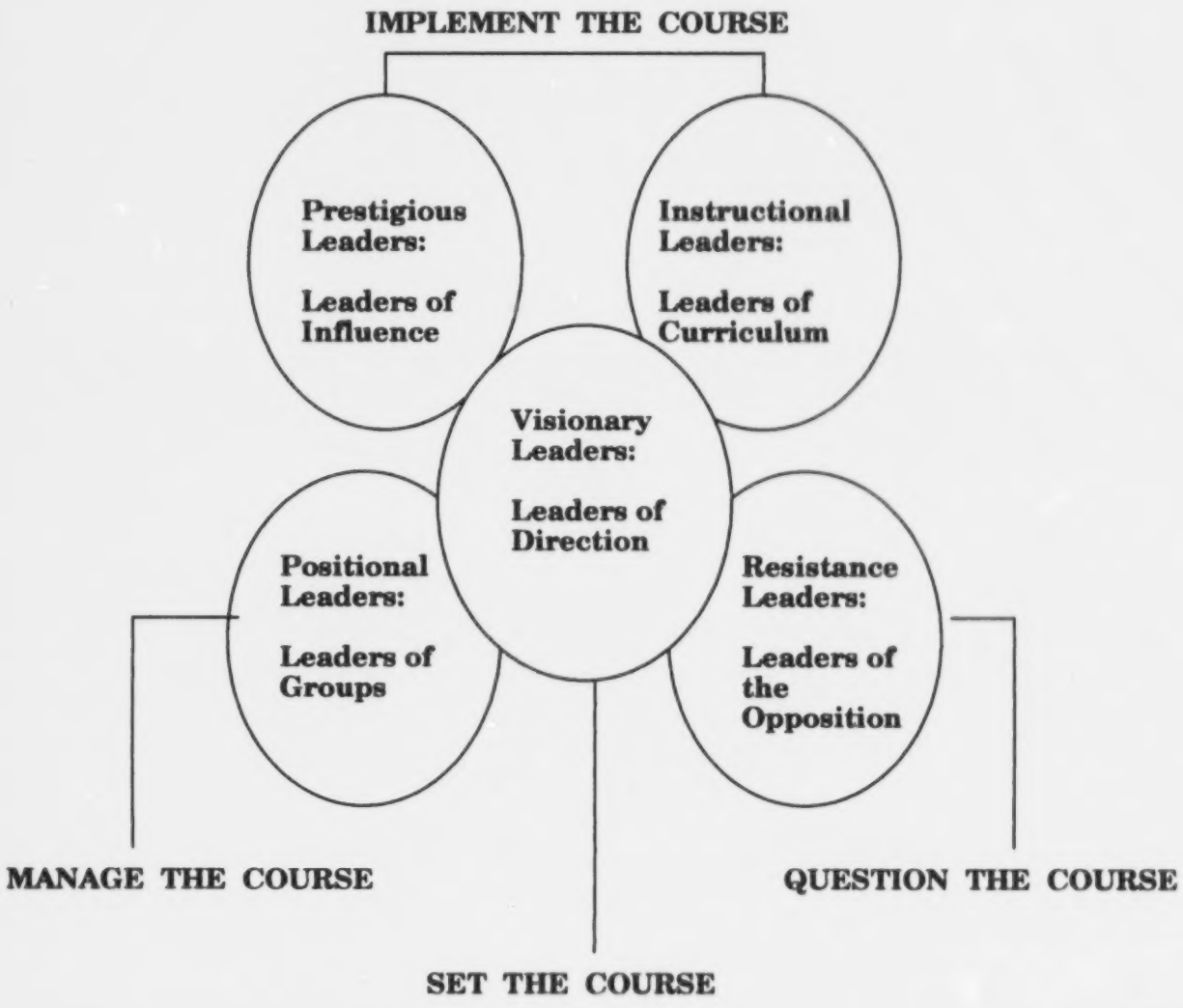

Figure 1
Team Decision-Making Ethnography